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Michael D. Higgins is the ninth President of Ireland. Michael D. Higgins is also a writer and poet, contributing to many books covering diverse aspects of Irish politics, sociology, history and culture. He has published two collections of essays: *Causes for Concern. Irish Politics, Culture and Society* (2007) and *Renewing the Republic* (2001); and four collections of poetry: *The Betrayal* (1990); *The Season of Fire* (1993); *An Arid Season* (2004) and *New and Selected Poems* (2011). As Ireland's first Minister for the Arts in 1993-97, his achievements include the reinvigoration of the Irish film industry, the establishment of Teilifís na Gaeilge, now TG4, and the repeal of censorship under Section 31 of the Broadcasting Acts.

Jerzy Jarniewicz is a Polish poet, translator and literary critic, who lectures in English at the University of Łódź. He has published twelve volumes of poetry, nine critical books and numerous essays on contemporary Irish, British and American literature.

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Basil Walsh (d. November 2014) was a scholar of Irish music history and the author of a biography on Catherine Hayes (2000) and Michael William Balfe (2008). He contributed entries to the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* and he also contributed to various magazines, journals, newspapers, and encyclopaedias. He was also involved in the production and recording of Balfe's Italian Opera, *Falstaff* (1838), which was produced by Opera Ireland in September 2008 in Dublin as part of the Balfe's bicentennial celebrations with great acclaim. He maintained Web/BLOG sites at: www.catherinehayes.com , www.britishandirishworld.com and <http://balfecontinentaloperas.wordpress.com/>.